

*Cypress Mulch is not good for your yard, it is not good for wildlife,
and it is not good for water quality*

In any garden supply or nursery store, you're likely to see bags and bags of cypress mulch for sale. Did you ever stop to think about the kinds of destruction you're actually paying for when you buy a bag of cypress mulch?

The unique cypress forest is a beautiful treasure that serves an important ecological role. It naturally filters pollutants and serves as a reservoir for flood water, and so it is essential for protecting ground water – both quality and quantity. It is a prime habitat for woodpeckers, wood storks, limpkins, several types of owls, opossums, bobcats, and wood ducks. Cypress forests protect our wildlife and our wetlands.

Almost all of Florida's old-growth cypress forests are gone now. They were clear-cut for lumber decades ago. Most of the cypress stands we see today are relatively young trees.

Thousands of acres of cypress are logged every year simply to produce mulch.

Most of Florida's cypress sawmills are mulch mills, grinding the entire tree in large chippers, producing nothing but mulch. Cypress mulch used to be produced mainly as a by-product of lumber operations, but the increasing demand for mulch has led to the use of whole trees – whole forests – for nothing but mulch.

When cypress is clear-cut from our native wetlands, the destroyed cypress trees are not replanted. When a cypress area is clear-cut and bare, that land is easily taken over by invasive plants such as Brazilian pepper. Sometimes the land is planted in pine for future logging, or drained for development. Either way, the cypress forest and its wetland and wildlife are lost – forever.

You can help save our cypress forests by using environmentally friendly mulch for your home and business landscaping, and by asking your friends and county government to do the same. If you don't find alternative mulches at your landscape supply store, enlighten the manager and request alternatives.

The old idea that cypress mulch is superior to other types is no longer true.

The old-growth cypress harvested prior to the 1950's had a reputation for being rot- and termite-resistant. But those trees have all been taken except for the few saved in preserves like Corkscrew. It takes hundreds of years for a cypress tree to grow the heartwood that used to have those properties. The young cypress that are harvested today are not decay or pest resistant and do not make a superior mulch.

Alternative Mulches

Recycled Yard Waste

Mulch made from recycled urban plant debris is very inexpensive (or even free in some areas). To locate your closest source, contact your Solid Waste Department or county Extension Service.

Eucalyptus Mulch

Produced from plantation-grown trees, this mulch is naturally insect-repellent, with a rich, long-lasting color.

Pine Bark

An excellent mulch with long-lasting color, it is often cheaper than purchased pine straw.

Pine Straw

Available commercially by the bale, or free if you rake it yourself. (Fallen leaves, especially oak leaves, make great mulch too.)

Melaleuca Mulch

Melaleuca is an invasive non-native tree that has taken over 500,000 acres of the Florida Everglades. Turning this tree into mulch helps rid the state of this terrible pest plant. Hopefully this mulch will be sold more widely as people learn to request it from their stores. Sometimes called "Enviromulch," one brand is "Florimulch." It is extremely long-lasting and termite-resistant.

Promulch

Made from recycled rubber tires, this is used in some playgrounds. It stays in place even in areas that flood occasionally, comes in different colors, and does not emit toxin. It is somewhat expensive.